

2007 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

from **Senator Rosa Franklin**

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Dear Neighbors:

Now that the 2007 legislative session is over, it is time to recap major achievements. We worked at breakneck speed in a spirit of cooperation to find workable solutions to issues important to our families and communities.

The session was highlighted by the passage of several key health care bills. One expands coverage to an additional 39,000 children. Another gets us significantly closer to giving all Washingtonians affordable health care options. A third, that I sponsored, will let foster children maintain their coverage until their 21st birthday.

After years of trying, we were successful in passing a measure that will let voters decide whether to amend the state constitution to allow the passage of school levies with a simple majority. Voters will also have a say in whether the state sets up a constitutionally protected rainy day fund, having recognized for quite some time the need for a cushion against a downturn in the economy.

Unprecedented progress was made in education, including boosting funding for instruction, phasing in all-day kindergarten, and earmarking funds for math and science instruction.

We did not forget about environmental health and cleaning up Puget Sound, for which much-needed funds were also allocated.

We also made enormous strides in public safety with a bill changing the offender re-entry system. It will help ensure that Pierce County will not have to shoulder more than its fair share of released offenders. This resulted from a collaborative effort that spanned many months.

In addition to these priorities, I also initiated action on other issues. These included offering lower-cost automobile liability insurance, boosting disability payments for injured workers, restoring balance in our state tax structure and protecting environmental health for our children.

If you have any questions, concerns or an idea for a bill, please don't hesitate to call my office. We would be happy to assist you. Thank you for allowing me to represent you.

Warm regards,

Rosa Franklin
Rosa Franklin
State Senator





Health care

Accessible, affordable health care concerns us all. With both the number of uninsured and costs still rising, we urgently need solutions.

Two years ago, Democrats made a commitment to cover all of Washington's children by 2010. We are well on our way with the governor signing into law our bill to provide coverage for an additional 39,000 children.

Adults also need programs that reduce costs and improve access to high-quality health care. The recommendations of the governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Costs and Access will bring real change to a system in need of reform by:

- Rewarding outcomes rather than merely paying for services;
- Reducing unnecessary emergency room visits;
- Using a "connector" to link small businesses with affordable options;
- Promoting electronic records to improve treatment and reduce errors; and
- Allowing coverage of dependent children younger than 25.

Colorectal cancer

This form of cancer is the third most common in the United States. My bill requires that insurance plans issued or renewed after July 1, 2008, cover colorectal cancer exams and lab tests. These benefits must be provided to those at least 50 years of age and to those younger than 50 if they are at high risk according to screening deadlines or recommendations.

Medically accurate sex education

We require school districts that offer sexual health education to assure that it is medically and scientifically accurate, age appropriate and include information on abstinence, the only method that prevents pregnancy. However, abstinence cannot be taught to the exclusion of other methods of preventing unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. It is most preferable to have parents teach their children, but realistically, this is not happening so our education system must fill this void.

Mental health parity

Mental illness is no less serious than physical illness. In 2005, we passed legislation that requires commercial health policies covering more than 50 employees to offer

coverage for mental illness on a par with that offered for other illnesses. Now we continue that course by requiring individual and small group plans to do the same.

Part D drug co-payment

Seniors shouldn't have to struggle to pay for prescription drugs. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) will make Part D Medicare drug co-payments to those who also receive Medical Assistance.

Boarding home residents

Ensuring that loved ones who reside in boarding homes are safely cared for is a responsibility that families take with the utmost seriousness. If DSHS determines that the health, safety or welfare of residents is in immediate jeopardy, it may appoint a temporary manager to assure safe and appropriate care and services.

Hospital infection information

Patients who enter hospitals shouldn't fear contracting infections while there. After working toward a solution for a number of years, we require hospitals to report data on hospital-acquired infections. The state Department of Health will post the data on its Web site to help consumers make informed choices about inpatient care.

Foster care coverage expansion

I sponsored a bill to extend Medicaid coverage to the age of 21 for youth transitioning from foster care at age 18. Youth who "age out" of foster care don't "age out" of the need for health care. The House version of my bill passed the Legislature.

Services for the developmentally disabled

Many families with children who have developmental disabilities struggle to provide the care needed to keep their children in the community and in a loving family. We consolidate three programs into one to make it easier for families to access family support resources. To assure funds go where they are most needed, we base eligibility on an assessment of individual need.

Need help with the high cost of prescription drugs?

More than 37,000 Washington residents have already signed up for the Washington Prescription Drug Program (WPDP) Discount Card. This free card allows Washington residents to save up to 60 percent on generic drugs and 20 percent on brand-name drugs at hundreds of participating pharmacies around the state, regardless of age or income.

You can enroll online at www.rx.wa.gov or by calling 1-800-913-4146.

The Budgets

Operating budget

We passed a budget that funds critical state services in education, health care, public safety, environmental protection and business promotion — all without a general tax increase AND while creating a reserve of \$724 million, with \$165 million locked away in a rainy day fund. More than half of the state 2007–09 operating budget is earmarked for education.

Rainy day fund

We are sending to the voters a proposed constitutional amendment to allow us to create a budget reserve. If passed, it would automatically put away 1 percent of annual state revenues into a budget stabilization account. The money could be used only if the governor declares a state of emergency or if forecasted annual job growth is less than 1 percent.

Capital budget

The capital, or construction, budget funds remodels, renovations, repairs and construction. A number of projects in our area are beneficiaries of this funding, including:

Boys and Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound, Lakewood	
HOPE Center for Youth	\$ 300,000
South Tacoma Community Center	1,500,000
Simon Youth Foundation Resource Center	150,000
Foss Waterway	1,000,000
ValHalla Hall	750,000
City of Tacoma Technical and Science	
Service Incubator	250,000
Centro Latino, Hilltop Renaissance	
Community	1,950,000
Martin Luther King Development Association,	
Hilltop Renaissance Community	4,000,000
Korean Women's Association Center	1,500,000
Salishan Housing Community – Hope VI	2,900,000
City of Tacoma minor league baseball –	
Rainiers	2,500,000
Goodwill of Tacoma	1,500,000
Tanbara Clinic	850,000
University Place Town Hall	1,000,000
Blueberry Park	5,000
Railcar restoration	50,000
Communities in Schools	50,000
University of Washington	6,150,000
Bates Technical College	1,972,600
Clover Park Technical College	4,270,402
Tacoma Narrow Bridge – lights	1,500,000

Transportation

Our transportation budget keeps ongoing safety improvement projects on schedule and honors voter promises from both the 2005 Nickel Package and 2003 Transportation Partnership Act. Projects in our area include:

I-5/Thorne Lane to 47th Avenue S.W. – median barrier replacement (for 2009–11)	\$ 3,288,000
SR 7/SR 507 to SR 512 – safety improvements	217,000
SR 16/I-5 to Tacoma Narrows Bridge – add HOV lanes (for 2007–17)	118,200,000
I-5 to the Traffic Management Center – finish a fiber optic trunk line that provides traffic information	167,000

Education

Simple majority

In November, voters will have the opportunity to amend the state constitution to permit school levies to pass with a simple majority, or 50 percent-plus-1 vote. It's a bill we've tried to pass for as long as I've served in the Legislature. It's time we let voters have the opportunity to decide. Bonds will still need a 60 percent majority to pass.

Early learning

We will develop a statewide early learning plan and rating system for child-care providers to inform parents of the quality of child-care providers and programs.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning

An extension to 2013 will be given for students to pass the math and science portions of the WASL. We also will create alternative assessment pathways for students to show how they meet standards.

Stable and accountable funding


Historical differences in funding have resulted in inequities in many school districts. To level the field, we will create a new formula so that districts are treated equally and fairly. We also are boosting the transportation funding for districts, which are having a hard time keeping up with rising gas prices.

Bills I sponsored	Passed
Public Guardianship Office Many vulnerable adults do not have someone to advocate on their behalf, leaving them at risk of being represented by unscrupulous individuals. My bill sets up protections for the vulnerable, including the Office of Public Guardianship, for the 4,500 state residents in need of such services. (SB 5320)	✓
Money received by inmates Children suffer enough when a parent is incarcerated. We will increase the amount that goes to child support from 15 percent to 20 percent when an inmate receives money from such sources as an inheritance. (SB 5429)	✓
Contracts with chiropractors Chiropractors will be able to delegate certain duties, within their scope of practice, just as other doctors do. We will prohibit an insurance company from refusing to make payments in these cases. (SB 5597)	✓
Dental care expansion Expanding access to dental care is especially crucial for children and the elderly. We will allow dental hygienists to perform basic services in senior centers, as well as the schools, hospitals and nursing homes where they are now allowed to work. (HB 1298)	✓

Town Hall Meeting

Thursday, June 28 • 6–8 p.m.
Korean Women’s Association
Community Services Center
123 E. 96th St., Tacoma 98445

Join me for a review of the legislative session.
Rep. Steve Conway will be joining me.



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